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2014 Fall Semester – Opening Week

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

It was great to see many of you at our Opening Convocation last Friday. There is a great deal of energy as we start classes today and start a new academic year. We had a good M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan program last week for most of our class of 2018 who are joining the WKU family for the first time. Congratulations to everyone involved, not only in that program, but in the year-long process to put this class together—to recruit them and to enroll them. Our challenge is to do what we can to help them succeed and to persist and graduate—hopefully in 2018, but however long it takes, the objective for each of them is to finish it.

As of this morning, we are stable with our enrollment. Our first-time, full-time numbers for all categories of students are right at last year's number with 3,684 new students enrolled, and our transfer students are up. We continue to struggle with returning students, mostly part-time students, but our focus on in-state, out-of-state, and international full-time students is paying off as is our work with online learning and special student cohorts. We will not be certain until the final census date in a few weeks, but we do appear to have achieved revenue stability with our enrollment profile as we begin the year.

Our residence halls are full. In fact, we have a few on a waiting list for a room, but that will settle out over the first week or two of the semester.

This is a big week for everyone on the campus as we officially open the newly renovated Downing Student Union (DSU). My congratulations and appreciation goes out to our Planning, Design, and Construction team and our BSAs who have worked tirelessly to get this building open. This building speaks to the quality of life we want all of our students, faculty, and staff to enjoy on this campus. It's a marvelous transformation of a 45 year-old building. I encourage all faculty and staff to make your way through that building at your earliest opportunity. We will have a student function this Tuesday, August 26, and then the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce joins the Student Government Association for an official dedication on Friday, August 29, at 4:30 p.m. prior to our opening football game Friday evening at 6:30 p.m.

With these two events on Friday, we will welcome large groups of people to campus. Given the anticipated parking and traffic congestion expected on Friday, and given that there are only 30 or so classes scheduled for 3 p.m. or later that day, we will dismiss classes on the main campus starting at 3 p.m. or later this Friday, August 29. Regional campuses are unaffected, as are main campus student services. Next week, on September 5, we will host our President's Circle Backpack Gala in the new DSU, introducing it to our donors as well. No schedule changes are needed for September 5.

It is great to have all of our faculty and staff back on campus. Thank you in advance for all you will do this year to meet the needs of our students and to further the scholarly value of a WKU degree. See you around campus!

Gary A. Ransdell
